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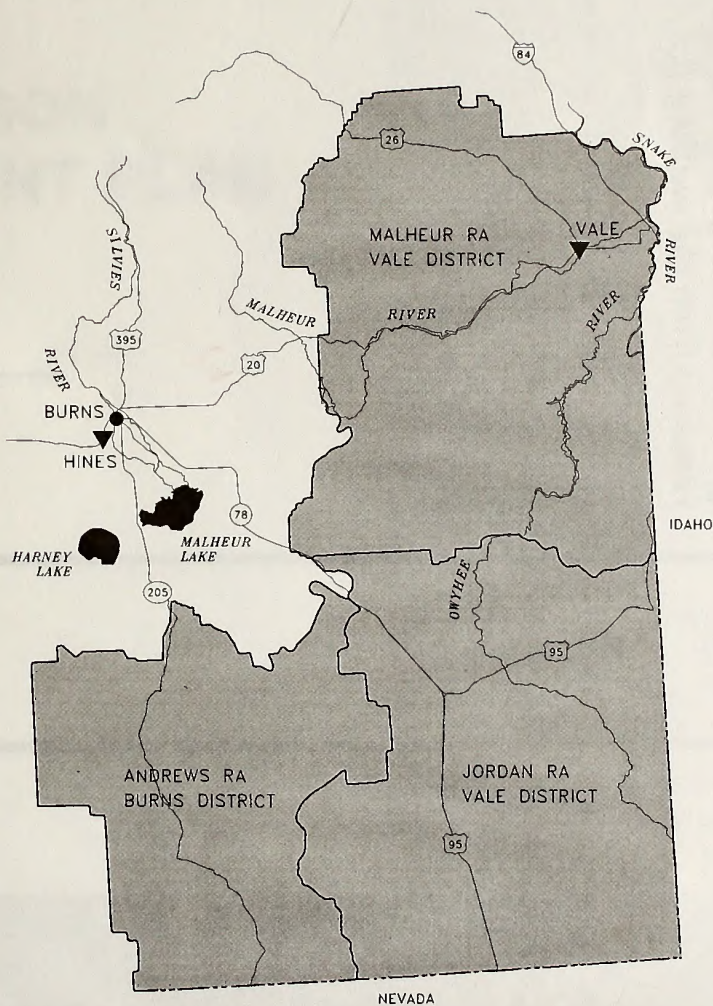
Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Vale District Office
100 Oregon Street
Vale, Oregon 97918

August 1995

Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan

Process and
Preliminary Issues



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An Opportunity for Public Comment



United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

September 1, 1995

Dear Public Land User:

We are asking your help as we begin the development of the Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS). This RMP/EIS will guide future efforts in public land resource management in the Andrews Resource Area, Burns District and the Malheur and Jordan Resource Areas, Vale District. Since this plan will affect public land in Harney, Malheur, and Grant Counties, it is vital to us to have your participation.

The RMP/EIS, scheduled for completion in 1997, is required and guided by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA).

What we call the scoping process is the first step in this plan development. In this step, we need to identify multiple-use conflicts (issues) occurring on public land.

The preliminary issues and proposed alternative themes outlined in the attached document were developed from informal public comments; contacts with Federal, state, and local governments; user or interest groups; and staff discussions. This is basically a place to start; your comments and concerns will be considered as we develop a more detailed document.

Please review the attached document and, if possible, attend any public meeting. Please send your comments to either of the above addresses by November 1, 1995.

If you have any questions, if you would like to be on our mailing list, if your address changes, or if you are receiving duplicate copies of our material, please contact Gary Cooper (Vale District 503-473-3141) or Glenn Patterson (Burns District 503-573-4429).

We look forward to your continued interest and participation.

Sincerely,

James E. May
Vale District Manager

Michael T. Green
Burns District Manager

I. What is Resource Management Planning?

An RMP is a "land use plan" which develops a set of comprehensive, long-range decisions concerning the use and management of BLM-administered resources. The plan is a broad view of the goals, objectives, and needs associated with public land. There may be areas where more detailed management direction is needed. These areas will be identified for development of implementation plans.

In 1994, as directed by President Clinton, the BLM joined with the Forest Service and other agencies to develop a new management strategy for lands in the Pacific Northwest. This ecosystem management strategy includes Forest Service and BLM-administered land in the interior Columbia River Basin and portions of the Northern Great Basin in eastern Oregon and Washington. This process includes a scientific assessment of ecosystem process and function within the area and an evaluation of different alternatives for management direction. The decisions to be made from this effort will provide guidelines for management. These guidelines will be used in the RMP, as well as any needed amendments to existing RMPs.

Table 1 identifies the various steps and proposed timeframes associated with the SEORMP process.

II. What is the Geographic Planning Area?

This RMP/EIS will discuss management on 6,349,655 acres of public land where the BLM is the administering agency (see map on back).

III. How Can You Help?

Please review the list of issues and alternative themes. Let us know if you would like additional issues considered or if you would like changes or additions to the alternative themes.

The most helpful comments relate to a specific concern or conflict, are within the legal responsibilities of the BLM, and consist of a concern or conflict that can be resolved effectively in the BLM planning process.

Issues or concerns we have encountered in resource management are listed. Other issues have been identified as being important to certain individuals or groups. We offer these as discussion items to stimulate your thinking as a possible place to start the planning process.

We ask that you consider these items carefully and see if the important issues have been identified. Do the four alternative themes present a reasonable range of ways to manage resources? Do you have any other concerns you think we should consider. Please let us know of any issues you think we may have overlooked.

We invite you to attend any of the public meetings outlined in Table 2.

IV. What is The Next Step?

The staff of the Burns and Vale Districts will analyze all public comments. We will publish a report reflecting the information received during the scoping period. The scoping input will be used to modify the preliminary issues and alternative themes to make them accurate, representative, and responsive. We will then publish another report describing the preliminary alternatives.

Following the final scoping document, we will release a summary of the Analysis of the Management Situations. Additional public meetings will be scheduled to discuss alternatives, determine the level and type of analysis needed in the RMP/EIS, and answer any questions.

Table 1. Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Planning Process

	Planning Process	Timeline
Step 1:	Scoping Process Public Scoping Meetings Close of Scoping Comment Period	September to November 1995 September 18 through 28, 1995 November 1, 1995
Step 2:	Development of Planning Criteria Mail Issues Identified in Step 1 Close of Issues Comment Period	October 1995 to May 1996 December 1995 January 31, 1996
Step 3:	Collection of Data and Information	October 1995 to May 1996
Step 4:	Prepare Analysis of Management Situation (AMS) Mail Planning Criteria and Preliminary Alternatives Close of AMS Comment Period	November 1995 to May 1996 February 1996 March 1996
Step 5:	Formulate Alternatives Mail Summary AMS, Planning Criteria, and Alternatives Public Meetings (TBA) Mail Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Close of Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Comment Period	January 1996 to July 1996 May 1996 May 1996 July 1996 August 1996
Step 6:	Estimate Effects Mail Draft RMP/EIS Public Meetings (TBA) Close of Draft RMP/EIS Comment Period	July 1996 to November 1996 November 1996 November 1996 January 1, 1997
Step 7:	Approve RMP/EIS; Prepare Record of Decision (ROD) Mail ROD on RMP/EIS	June 1997 November 1997
Step 8:	Implement Monitoring and Evaluation	Ongoing process

Table 2. Schedule of Meetings for the Public Scoping Process, Southeastern Oregon, Resource Management Plan

City	Location	Date	Time
Vale, OR	St. Patrick Catholic Church Parish Hall 690 A St West	Sept 18, 1995	7:00 PM (MDT)
Burns, OR	Harney County Fairgrounds Memorial Building	Sept 19, 1994	7:00 PM (PDT)
McDermitt, NV	McDermitt Community Hall	Sept 20, 1995	7:00 PM (PDT)
Jordan Valley, OR	Lions Den Hwy 95	Sept 21, 1995	7:00 PM (PDT)
Denio, NV	Denio Community Building	Sept 20, 1995	7:00 PM (PDT)
Diamond, OR	Diamond School	Sept 21, 1995	7:00 PM (PDT)
Bend, OR	Riverhouse Resort 3075 N Hwy 97	Sept 25, 1995	7:00 PM (PDT)
Portland, OR	Audubon Society 515 Cornell Rd	Sept 26, 1995	7:00 PM (PDT)
Boise, ID	BLM Boise District Fire Management Office Conference Room 2056 Commerce	Sept 28, 1995	7:00 PM (MDT)

If you would like an informal meeting, please let us know. We can accommodate meetings with individuals or groups on an informal basis, but these must be completed by November 1, 1995.

The location and scheduling of additional meetings will be partially determined by the participation level of the scoping meetings.

V. What Are The Possible Issues?

- Five preliminary issues have been identified:
- Vegetation Management
 - Land Tenure and Access
 - Fire Management
 - Special Management Areas
 - Recreation Management

Each of these issues can lead to a conflict relating to the use or preservation of a resource. For each issue or concern, we ask that you provide information on how we can solve conflicts, how can we better manage uses, and what can we do to protect and enhance resources and still allow the public to enjoy them and obtain useful renewable and nonrenewable products from the land.

A. Vegetation Management Issue

There are vegetation demands (both consumptive and nonconsumptive) from wildlife, wild horses, and livestock. There are ecosystem management objectives for biological diversity; plant health needs; and water quality, riparian condition, and soil protection requirements.

Some grazing management practices prescribed in existing land use plans are not fully implemented nor are they capable of being implemented within a reasonable timeframe. Existing management decisions may not adequately address concerns for fish and wildlife habitats, water quality, and riparian conditions.

How can upland and riparian areas be managed to improve vegetation, soils, and water quality? What upland and riparian areas need protection from surface disturbance? How should upland and riparian areas be managed for game and nongame wildlife and fish species and their habitat? How should upland and riparian areas be managed to provide forage for livestock and wild horses? Are there changes needed in the grazing management program for better management of vegetation? Are there changes needed in the fire management program for vegetation management? Are there changes needed in other management activities (e.g. recreation or minerals) that are needed for vegetation management? If so, what kind of changes are needed and where? How should all the above be prioritized and established?

B. Land Tenure and Access Issue

The scattered tracts, withdrawals, and/or intermingled ownerships within the three resource areas present problems for efficient management of the public resources. Land tenure and access issues can be resolved through exchanges with other landowners, acquisitions, easements, transfers with other agencies, and the sale of identified tracts.

Is there a need to consolidate public land holdings, and if so, what are the priorities for these lands? Are there public lands that should be identified for disposal through sale, exchange, or transfer? If so, which lands? Are there private land holdings that should be acquired to enhance public values, and if so, which lands? What are public access considerations concerning easements, previously established public roads (RS2477 assertions), transportation plans, and maintenance?

C. Fire Management Issue

Historically, BLM's fire management policy has generally been full suppression. Besides being costly, this practice does not consider the beneficial uses of fire as a management tool in certain applications. Changes in current fire management strategies could involve establishment of three or more zones: full suppression (natural and human-ignition), modified or limited suppression, and prescribed fire.

Assuming BLM will continue to meet its responsibility to protect life and property, are there areas where modified or limited suppression of fire would be appropriate, and if so, where? Are there areas where either prescribed natural fire or prescribed fire would be a beneficial management tool, and if so, where? Are there recommended constraints on prescribed fire, such as Oregon Department of Environmental Quality air quality standards? Which areas, if any, should have full suppression retained to protect important public/private values?

D. Special Management Areas (SMA) Issue

Special Management Areas are managed for their unique and/or significant features. SMAs include Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), Research Natural Area (RNA), Outstanding Natural Area (ONA), National Conservation Areas (NCA), Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Wilderness Study Areas (WSA).

Thirteen sites have been designated as ACECs/RNAs in the Andrews Resource Area, five sites in the Malheur Resource Area, and three sites in the Jordan Resource Area. Other sites have been identified to further protect or enhance the habitat of listed threatened, endangered, or sensitive species; to provide scientific, and educational study opportunities; or to preserve outstanding or unique scenic, botanical, geologic, cultural or other resource values.

There has been a proposal for a National Conservation Area (NCA) for Steens Mountain. NCAs require Congressional action formally identifying protection and/or management for specific uses and/or preservation of unique areas. The National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act includes a provision to identify possible additions to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Designation of wilderness areas requires action by the U.S. Congress. The Burns and Vale Districts have identified 1.99 million acres in 48 separate WSAs. The President has forwarded his recommendation to Congress regarding wilderness designation. We are now waiting for Congress to act.

Should existing SMAs be retained under their current designations and management prescriptions? If not, why? If so, should their existing boundaries be adjusted (expanded or contracted)? If so, where? Are there other areas or sites in the planning area for which special designations are needed? If so, where? What are the values? Should some of these SMAs be de-designated if the reason of initial significance is gone? What would be the effect of designating or removing designations on other resource values or management? Should there be NCA designations pursued for areas within this land use plan? If so, where and for what values? What affect would this have on resources and management? What waterways should the BLM recommend for designation under the National Wild and Scenic River Systems Act? How should the public lands be managed on these waterway segments being studied? How will this affect boating use and other uses of the waterway corridors?

E. Recreation Management Issue

Outdoor recreation within the planning area is expanding and creating a demand for recreational opportunities. Whitewater boating, fishing, off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, rockhounding, driving for pleasure, hunting, and camping are recreational activities that account for most of the recreation within the planning area. Increasing recreational use may require restricting OHV use, setting aside fragile ecosystems, and/or developing more recreational sites to manage human impacts (e.g., in campgrounds and OHV use areas).

What types and levels of recreational use should the RMP provide? How, when, and to what extent should we enhance the quality of recreational opportunities and experiences? What conflicts with resource values or other uses would restrict recreational opportunities? What types of OHV restrictions are required to protect fragile watersheds? Should the BLM be developing more campgrounds and facilities, and generally improving recreation access opportunities to meet public demand, provide for public health and safety, and protect resources? Should BLM seek additional partnership opportunities with local communities to enhance tourism? Is there a need to increase public awareness of recreation resources and opportunities? How will all the above be prioritized and established?

VI. What Are The Tentative Land Use Alternatives?

The following alternatives are a beginning point for discussion and consideration. We are certain that, with your help, we can develop comprehensive alternatives with objectives to address the variety of resources in the planning area.

Each alternative proposes a central theme describing management direction for the resources with known issues. Since some alternatives may consist of a mix of portions of alternatives, the final range of alternatives may include aspects of several of the preliminary choices. Likewise, after analysis, the final RMP decision may incorporate aspects of several alternatives. In addition, sub-alternatives may be used where only one or two significant variables are considered appropriate (e.g., full mineral entry withdrawal).

Alternative A

Theme: Emphasize sustainable commodity production and enhancement of economic benefits.

Alternative B

Theme: Continue present management (no action).

Alternative C

Theme: Emphasize natural values while accommodating commodity production.

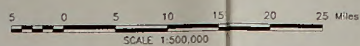
Alternative D

Theme: Emphasize maximum protection and enhancement of natural values.

BURNS AND VALE DISTRICTS
PLANNING AREA

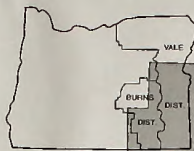
SOUTHEAST OREGON
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

1995



LEGEND

- District Boundary
- Resource Area Boundary
- RMP Planning Area Boundary
- Administered by BLM
- USFS Lands
- Other Federal Lands
- State Lands
- Private Lands



OREGON



Informal Discussions

We are interested in informally meeting (before the close of the comment period which ends November 1, 1995) with individuals or groups regarding the identification of issues. Please contact Gary Cooper at (503)-473-3144 or Glenn Patterson at (503) 573-4429.

Comment Response Card

*Please print clearly,
Please Clip and Mail back
to one of the addresses below.*



Gary Cooper
Bureau of Land Management
Vale District Office
100 Oregon Street
Vale, Oregon 97918
(503) 473-3144

Glenn Patterson
Bureau of Land Management
Burns District
HC 74-12533, Hwy 20 West
Hines, Oregon 97738
(503) 573-4400



YES, I would like a copy of the SEORMP/EIS at each stage of the planning process



Please send me only the **FINAL COPY** of the SEORMP/EIS



Other (please specify):

Please take a few minutes to provide your input concerning the information discussed in this document. In addition, please write down any issues. We are interested in your ideas and look forward to hearing from you.

If you wish to remain on the mailing list, please complete and return this response card. We are trying to save paper and conserve resources, so if we do not hear from you, your name will be removed from the mailing list.

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